

[Mrs. Hulda Esther Thorpe]

[?] [???] [Dup?]

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St.

DATE October 11, 1938 SUBJECT American Folklore

1. Name and address of informant Mrs. Hulda Esther Thorpe, 7009 Francis St.
2. Date and time of interview October 11, 1938, 8 to 9:45 p.m. October 18, 1938, 7:40 to 9:30 p.m.
3. Place of interview Home of informant
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant None (personal contact)
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

None

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Comfortable American home, good furnishings, piano, etc. Informant in wheel chair, house extra well kept, clean and refined. Good neighborhood, not too closely built up, almost, in fact, within two block of extreme east line of Lincoln.

Yard well kept also. A better than average American home. C-15 Neb.

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FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St., Lincoln

DATE October 11, 1938 SUBJECT American Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. Hulda Esther Thorpe, 7009 Francis St.

1. Ancestry English-American

2. Place and date of birth [Coleta?], Ill., December 26, 1853

3. Family Husband living - - 3 girls, 1 boy, all living.

4. Places lived in, with dates Coleta, Ill., 1853 to 1873, Abington, Ill., 1873 to 1874 -
Marshalltown, Ia., 1885 to 1901, Clark, S. D. 1901 to 1914, Bethany, Nebr. 1914 to date.

5. Education, with dates

Country school, Coleta, Ill., 1860-1866, music school 1873 to 1874.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Housework, music, sewing, 1886 to date, painting.

7. Special skills and interests

Music, painting, cooking, knitting.

8. Community and religious activities

Christian church; home work for church societies, etc.

9. Description of informant Bright, alert, forceful, cheerful, eager to visit, average size.

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10. Other points gained in interview Was hurt when 4 years old and has spent most of life in wheel chair, though married and mother of 4 children. Seemed physically better and more energetic than most people much younger and of normal status. Indeed a remarkable woman.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

My father was a kind of home made doctor who looked after the sick, pulled teeth and doctored horses.

He used to haul grain 110 miles to Chicago with team and wagon. He was well to do and had money in the bank. One time he drew out some money and started home, a long way to travel.

He overtook a man who asked for a ride. This man acted funny and as they rode he said he had a buggy to trade. As they came to a lonely stretch in some timber he said his buggy was nearby. Father stopped the team and looked toward the place the man pointed out.

He lit his lantern and as he stopped the team the queer acting man got down from the wagon. Father was very suspicious and once the man got out of the way he suddenly whipped the horses up and they galloped off. He was always sure this fellow intended to rob him.

We were always very busy on the farm, cooking, getting up food supplies and preparing wool for the weaver. Mother used to wash the wool, and color and die it.

It was taken to a woman in the neighborhood who would weave it into cloth. There was a big family of us and we used lots of cloth. A share of the wool was given to the weaver for their work.

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We used to eat lots of corn bread which was baked in hot ashes.

There was a mill near us and they would grind the grain for a share, I think a fifth or a tenth. Sometimes it took an hour to grind a bushel or so.

When we made hominy we boiled it in lye water until the hulls came loose. Fried hominy was very good also boiled hominy. It is hard to get good hominy these days. Apples we would pare in rings and string on thread to dry. We also dried lots of sweet corn and it was cooked when used later in the season. It was delicious and much better than the cooked canned corn. Sometimes we had apple bees and the folks would all work at drying the apples, a good deal like a quilting bee.

Along about September we also had knitting bees. In this way the people helped one another get things ready for the long hard winters.

[??] in our neighborhood the farmers were bothered by "squatters" who just came and settled on their land.

My father was elected captain of a sort of committee to punish one of these squatters. They rigged up a whipping post and took a man by the name of Bobbie Green there to be whipped for squatting on a neighbor's land.

He was sickly and fainted as they tied him up. My father refused to go any further and forbid the rest to hurt him.

The people used to call on different neighbors and they would all sing and have a good time.

One song went like this. It came from one of the School books. 'Come in little stranger I said As she tapped at my [?]. With a blanket pinned over her head That reached to the

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basket she bore. A look full of innocence fell From her modest and pretty blue eyes [?] said,

'I have matches to sell And hope you are willing to buy My mother sits home without food Beside our poor sick Billie's bed. She paid all her money for wood And so I sell matches for bread. I'd go to the yard and get chips But then it would make me so sad To see the man building the ships And to think, they had made one so bad My father was lost on the deep. The ship never got to the shore And mother's so sad and would weep To hear the wind blow and sea roar Where my father forever will sleep.

We used to play a game—"snap and catch 'em."

The boys would stand in a circle and a girl would go round and round and would then tap some boy on the shoulder. He would then chase her and if she was caught, he would kiss her.

One time there was a crippled boy in the game and [???] roll my chair around the ring and tag him. He couldn't go very fast and I rolled the chair away as fast as I could. But he crippled along and caught me. Maybe I didn't go very fast!

We knew of a little white girl, who was carried off by the Indians, when only a few years old. She could not be found and years past. Her parents died and long after one of her brothers located her in an Indian tribe, not so far away either.

She had married one of the Indians and raised a family. Her people were very happy about this and persuaded her to go home with them. But she had become too much of an Indian to stay there and wanted to go back to the tribe.

She finally went, letting them know that to her, the only life she knew was with the Indians and was a happier one. We think this happened in the territory of South Dakota and Nebraska.

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One of the best Thanksgiving dinners we ever knew of was when a family of settlers had their nice wild turkey dinner taken by the Indians, who came in silently and just shoved the folks back and eat it up.

They did not harm the white people though and after they were gone the women made a big corn bread and with what few things the Indians left, they had a feast, the best as the daughter tells, that she ever eat. This was because they were so happy and thankful that the Indians spared them.

One very cold day in winter, we heard that a neighbor boy was dying of pneumonia. The family were French Catholics by the name of Bertrand. We went in our bobsled and when we got there they came out and helped me into the house. They were sad and had given up hope of saving the sick boy's life and had quit trying to do anything more about it.

We went into the sickroom, the oldest boy pushing my chair. The sick boy cried out, 'Oh Mrs. Thorpe, I've got to go, I can hear the spirits rapping around the bed now.'

The whole family believed in spirits and the boy had this on his mind. I said, 'Now, [Neddie?], do you think there is anything in this spirit rapping'? 'Oh, yes, he answered, 'they're around everywhere all the time, but now they have come to get me.'

I told him to put his trust in God and have faith and he would be all right. A young lady from the neighborhood came in then and we each held one of his hands and soothed him. He had gone into a sort of nervous spell. Many folks believed that if healthy well people would hold the hands of the sick it would give them new strength as a force would pass from a well person to a sick one, some however believed it was the other way and that what little strength was left in the afflicted would pass to a stronger person. So some folks would not go into a sick room and often even the near and dear ones would leave the sick to suffer alone. Even if no one was sick, a lot of folks thought it was unhealthy for the very young and old to sleep in the same bed or even room.

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'But I am getting ahead of myself.' I arranged the boys night cap and hair and he seemed easier.

Then I asked his mother for onions. They got some and I fried them in lots of grease and made two poultices, one for the chest and one for the back. He went to sleep and his breathing was easier. A blizzard had started and the wind howled and roared. The people did not want us to leave, so we staid up all that night and kept the fires going. The wind rattled the damper in the stove and made the draft roar. The Bertrands all went to bed. I believe that they thought this storm was the sign of death approaching and devils and spirits howling and moaning.

Lots of sick people have died during night storms in the winter. But this probably just happens or made them worse because bad weather makes the body weaker.

When morning came the family got up and when they saw the boy, they said, 'He's better!' [Neddie?] got well and we always believed we saved his live.

His family had lost hope and faith and so had he, as a sick person is very sensitive to the feelings of people around him. He knew us well and when we came in this dark hour and pitched in to help him, he took new hope and faith and his body strengthened. Maybe lots of deathly sick people could be saved if good kind friends would come and give them new faith by getting busy in a confident way and staying with them. People who just go to visit the sick and sit with nothing to do are apt to show that they think the sufferer is in a bad way. Busy people who know what to do, give us more faith and confidence.

————- FORM D (Supplementary)

Mrs. Thorpe has been an invalid in a wheel chair since she was four years old and has developed a faith, which certainly exceeds far that of the average person in the best of

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health and physical capacity. She just seems to radiate a certain force and magnetism which one can fairly feel. FORM D (Supplementary)

“The [?] Line” On the Sunny [?] On the [?] Line Rise and shine and you pay no fine Rise and shine and you pay no fine Ridin' on the [?] on the [?] [?] Line.

Verse: Three Little Niggers all dressed in white Tried to go to heaven On the tail of a kite The kite string broke And down they fell Instead of going to heaven by_____they went to sleep.

There were more verses to the above song but these are all which were available. Another song was mentioned, “The Latch String's Always Out For You.”